



Legacy Finding Aid for Manuscript and Photograph Collections

801 K Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

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Finding aids are narrative guides to archival collections created by the repository to describe the contents of the material. They often provide much more detailed information than can be found in individual catalog records. Contents of finding aids often include short biographies or histories, processing notes, information about the size, scope, and material types included in the collection, guidance on how to navigate the collection, and an index to box and folder contents.

What are Legacy Finding Aids?

The following document is a legacy finding aid – a guide which has not been updated recently. Information may be outdated, such as the Historical Society’s contact information or exact box numbers for contents’ location within the collection. Legacy finding aids are a product of their times; language and terms may not reflect the Historical Society’s commitment to culturally sensitive and anti-racist language. This guide is provided in “as is” condition for immediate use by the public. This file will be replaced with an updated version when available.

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The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., is a community-supported educational and research organization that collects, interprets, and shares the history of our nation’s capital. Founded in 1894, it serves a diverse audience through its collections, public programs, exhibits, and publications.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, D.C.
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS FINDING AID

Title: MS 191 Tobias Watkins Papers, 1826-1847, 1859

Processor: Andria Leo Field

Date: October 19, 2002

Tobias Watkins (1780-1855) was born in Maryland and died in Washington, D.C. after leading a long life of medical, editorial, governmental, and educational service. He obtained medical degrees from both St. John's College, Annapolis in 1798, and the Philadelphia Medical College in 1802. With his training, Watkins then served as an army surgeon in the war of 1812-1815. Success in the medical field led him to become the assistant surgeon general of the U.S. from 1818 to 1821.

Watkins was also a prolific writer and editor. He regularly wrote articles for periodicals, as well as editing the work of others. For instance, in 1816-20, he and brother-in-law Stephen Simpson edited the *Portico*. Also, in 1822, Watkins translated *Memoir upon the Negotiations between Spain and the United States which led to the Treaty of 1819* from its original Spanish version. Watkins served as secretary to the congressional committee that processed the treaty that brought Florida under U.S. control.

From 1824-29, Watkins was the Fourth Auditor of the U.S. Treasury Department. On May 5, 1829, he was arrested for embezzling \$3050, and using that money for his own purposes. On August 15, 1829, Watkins was indicted and sentenced to repay all funds, and to spend 9 months in jail.

Watkins must have recovered from this incident, for in 1845 he was made "principal teacher" for the second district male school in the District of Columbia.

It is not known exactly when Tobias Watkins moved to Washington, although it was most likely after the War of 1812, when he began his work in the government. It is known, however, that in 1822 Watkins lived on Capitol Hill, on Delaware Avenue between B and C Streets. In 1827, Watkins is reported as having lived on the northwest corner of I and 17th streets in northwest Washington.

Scope and Content: The Tobias Watkins Papers, 1826-1847, 1859, consist of 13 letters written to a Mr. John Proud, Watkins's own writings and narratives, anonymous letters, a newspaper clipping and receipt.

Donor: Kennedy Watkins (descendant of Tobias Watkins, date unknown.)

Size: 3 folders

Container List

Folder 1: Tobias Watkins' letters (13) to John Proud, 1826-1828.

Folder 2: Tobias Watkins' essay *Anniversary Discourse Delivered Before the Columbian Institute*, 1826, and letter from the *Massachusetts Journal* to Tobias Watkins, 1828. *Camden Phoenix* newspaper in which George Simpson, relative of the Watkins family, is featured, 1847.

Folder 3: Tobias Watkins' narratives and anonymous letters, undated. Also, a small receipt for 30 pounds of bread from a Mr. McKelden, September 30, 1859.